



Bill Gleason <wbgleason@gmail.com>

Building Code Violations at Northrop Auditorium

6 messages

Bill Gleason <wbgleason@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 22, 2010 at 10:32 PM

Reply-To: bgleason@umn.edu

To: lars3320@umn.edu

Mr. Merwyn Larson
Building Official
University of Minnesota
Building Code Division
319 15th Avenue SE
RM 270 Donhowe Building
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear Mr. Larson:

I write to you at the suggestion of the office of the Attorney General, Lori Swanson.

I write concerning possible violations of code at Northrop auditorium as well as what has been claimed to be life safety issues:

“The University is very concerned about the fragility of the building. Northrop is egregiously out of compliance with code and life-safety requirements and code officials could close the building at any time.”

*Steven Rosenstone, Vice President for Cultural/Scholarly Affairs
University of Minnesota*

This statement was made by VP Rosenstone and recorded in publicly available minutes of the University of Minnesota Senate Committee on Finance and Planning, January 25, 2010.

These claims by a university official are shocking. If true, then the University should immediately close Northrop until it can be gotten up to code and life-safety issues addressed. To do otherwise is irresponsible.

I first contacted the City of Minneapolis to report these possible code violations. There I was told that since the building belongs to the State of Minnesota, the City of Minneapolis could not do anything. The State Attorney General's Office has suggested that I contact your office for help in this matter.

I trust that you will pursue this matter as soon as possible and I look forward to a response concerning this matter.

Please acknowledge receipt of this message.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

William B. Gleason

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William B. Gleason, University of Minnesota
Associate Professor, Department of Laboratory Medicine & Pathology
Fellow, University of Minnesota Supercomputer Institute
Graduate Faculty: Chemistry and Biomedical Engineering
(612) 626-2455 (office) (612) 626-5115 (lab)
www.umn.edu/~bgleason (website)
<http://ptable.blogspot.com/> (Periodic Table blog)
<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/bgleason/pt/> (UThink blog)

Bill Gleason <wbgleason@gmail.com>

Fri, Feb 26, 2010 at 2:55 PM

Reply-To: bgleason@umn.edu

To: lars3320@umn.edu

Dear Mr. Larson,

Did you receive my message, resent below?

In it I asked you please acknowledge receipt of my message. If I do not hear from you within two business days, you will leave me no choice but to pursue the matter elsewhere.

Thank you for your immediate attention.

Sincerely,

W. B. Gleason

[Quoted text hidden]

Merwyn Larson <lars3320@umn.edu>

Fri, Feb 26, 2010 at 5:35 PM

To: "bgleason@umn.edu" <bgleason@umn.edu>

Dear Professor Gleason,

Thank you for your note. Despite your concerns, there are no violations of the Minnesota State Building Code that require the immediate closure of Northrop Memorial Auditorium. Like many buildings of its era, Northrop is out of compliance with some parts of the code but there are no critical life safety issues that would force us to close the building at this time.

A comprehensive facility condition assessment in 2005 found Northrop to be in good structural condition, but did identify a number of items that required attention. As a result, the University invested \$2.45 million to address life safety issues in Northrop. The work included installation of an emergency generator and lighting, removal of obstructions in the paths of emergency egress, installation of safety railings and aisle lighting in the balcony, installation of compliant hardware on exit doors and installation of a new fire alarm panel.

The same facilities condition assessment reported that no aspect of Northrop is without issue and that the deteriorating mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems need attention. As Vice President Rosenstone told the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning, the failure of one of those systems would result in the closure of the building.

As I'm sure you know, Northrop Auditorium is scheduled for a complete renovation later this year. The work will eliminate the code compliance issues and replace the fragile mechanical and electrical systems. Like you, I look forward to the work being completed.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely

Merwyn Larson

University Building Official

Merwyn Larson, P.E.

University Building Official

U of M Building Code Division

319 15th Ave. S.E. - #270

Minneapolis, MN 55455

Phone: (612) 625-5973

Fax: (612) 625-6667

From: Bill Gleason [mailto:wbgleason@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2010 8:33 PM
To: lars3320@umn.edu
Subject: Building Code Violations at Northrop Auditorium

Mr. Merwyn Larson

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

Bill Gleason <wbgleason@gmail.com>
Reply-To: bgleason@umn.edu
To: Merwyn Larson <lars3320@umn.edu>

Fri, Feb 26, 2010 at 5:43 PM

Dear Mr. Larson,

Thank you for your rapid response Mr. Larson. I am afraid that there seems to be some disagreement between what you state below and what Rosenstone said at the faculty meeting. Let me repeat it for you:

“The University is very concerned about the fragility of the building. Northrop is egregiously out of compliance with code and life-safety requirements and code officials could close the building at any time.”

That statement says to me that "Northrop IS out of compliance with code and life-safety requirements..."

Are you telling me that this statement is not correct and that Northrop is in compliance with code and life-safety requirements? As the person responsible for the building have you personally made an inspection recently?

I am very concerned that these issues be addressed and am concerned that Rosenstone's statement makes it look as if the University is unconcerned about public safety and the safety of those University employees who work in Northrop.

Thank you for a response.

Sincerely,

Bill Gleason

[Quoted text hidden]

Merwyn Larson <lars3320@umn.edu>
To: "bgleason@umn.edu" <bgleason@umn.edu>

Tue, Mar 2, 2010 at 6:36 PM

Dear Professor Gleason,

As I stated in my previous e-mail, Northrop is similar to many buildings of its era in that it is out of compliance with some parts of the State Building Code. However, there are no critical life safety issues that would force us to close the building at this time.

Taken in context, it appears to me that Vice President Rosenstone is saying that Northrop would close if the building's fragile mechanical, electrical or plumbing systems fail. Of course, that would be the case if any of those systems failed in most major buildings on campus or throughout the Twin Cities.

The investment of \$2.45 million in 2005 to remedy life safety issues in Northrop shows that the University is indeed concerned about public safety and the safety of the employees who work in Northrop.

Thank you for your note.

Sincerely,

Merwyn Larson

From: Bill Gleason [mailto:wbgleason@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2010 3:43 PM
To: Merwyn Larson
Subject: Re: Building Code Violations at Northrop Auditorium

[Quoted text hidden]

Bill Gleason <wbgleason@gmail.com>
Reply-To: bgleason@umn.edu
To: Merwyn Larson <lars3320@umn.edu>

Tue, Mar 2, 2010 at 6:47 PM

Dear Mr. Larson,

Thank you for your note below. I am afraid that I cannot agree with you given what VP Rosenstone earlier said. In addition to the section I quoted to you which indicates that the condition is life-threatening, he also said:

"The mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are well beyond their useful life; some are the original 1929 systems. There is no fireproofing of structural steel or protection of structural wood, and at the end of a concert air quality is below acceptable standards. The reason one gets sleepy at Northrop events, Dr. Rosenstone commented, is not necessarily because of the event but because CO2 levels are high enough to make people drowsy."

So I am afraid that your assurances that everything is OK are not satisfactory.

Is it your position that you, as the person responsible for the building, are not going to do anything about this situation.

Is this is the case, please respond as soon as possible so that I may pursue the matter elsewhere in accordance with suggestions made by the Attorney General's Office.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Bill Gleason

[Quoted text hidden]
